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Message Text

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60
ACTION L-03

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SAJ-01 IO-14 NIC-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 CU-05 DRC-01 /123 W
---------- 130282
R 241546Z SEP 74
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2775
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 14433

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, US
SUBJ: ART EXHIBIT AFFAIR

REF: STATE 207985

1. ARTIST OSCAR RABIN, PRINCIPAL ORGANIZER OF UNOFFICIAL ART EXHIBIT, TOLD EMBOFF SEPTEMBER 24 THAT, CONTRARY TO SOME PRESS REPORTS, ARTISTS HAD NOT YET RECEIVED PERMISSION TO STAGE SECOND SHOW. MATTER IS NOW BEING NEGOTIATED WITH OFFICIALS OF MOSCOW CITY COUNCIL CULTURAL SECTION. RABIN SAID OFFICIALS HAD FLOATED IDEA OF HOLDING EXHIBIT IN MOSCOW'S IZMAILOVSKY PARK, BUT HAD NOT YET GIVEN DEFINITE GO-AHEAD. ARTISTS HAVE ALREADY MADE "CONCESSION" BY AGREEING TO HOLD EXHIBIT IN PARK, RATHER THAN AT SITE OF ABORTED FIRST EXHIBIT, AS THREATENED IN LETTER TO GOVERNMENT. RABIN HAS INSPECTED VARIOUS SITES WITH CULTURAL SECTION OFFICIALS AND PLANS TO CALL ARTISTS TOGETHER TO DISCUSS VARIOUS PROPOSALS.

2. RABIN DID NOT KNOW WHO IN THE GOVERNMENT WOULD MAKE THE FINAL DECISION ON THE EXHIBIT AND FELT THAT OFFICIALS WITH WHOM HE IS DEALING MAY BE WAITING FOR WORD FROM HIGHER UP. DESPITE WELL-ORGANIZED BREAKUP OF FIRST EXHIBIT, HE SAID ACTIONS OF AUTHORITIES THEREAFTER WERE COMPLETELY CONFUSED. HE POINTED OUT ANOMALY OF CHARGES MADE AFTER ARRESTS - HE AND ANOTHER ARTIST
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WERE GIVEN FINES OF 20 RUBLES (WHICH THEY DID NOT PAY) AND HIS

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SON AND FEMALE ARTIST INVOLVED WERE RELEASED AFTER FOUR DAYS OF BEING TRANSFERRED FROM ONE PLACE OF CONFINEMENT TO ANOTHER. (THEY SUPPOSEDLY WERE TO SERVE FIFTEEN DAYS IMPRISONMENT). RABIN, WHO IS NOW UNDER DOCTOR'S TREATMENT FOR EXTREME NERVOUS CONDITION, SAID "GOD ONLY KNOWS" IF SECOND EXHIBIT WILL BE ALLOWED. ALTHOUGH RABIN DID NOT MENTION IT, ANOTHER OF THE ORGANIZERS TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT OFFICIALS ARE INSISTING ON A LETTER FROM THE ARTISTS DENOUNCING PROVOCATIVE ACTION OF WESTERN JOURNALISTS AT FIRST EXHIBIT AS QUID PRO QUO FOR APPROVAL OF SECOND EXHIBIT. IF EXHIBIT TAKES PLACE, RABIN SAID, ARTISTS WELCOME PRESENCE OF DIPLOMATS AND PRESS ASY PROTECTION AGAINST FURTHER VIOLENCE. ANOTHER ARTIST PRESENT SAID, "IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU (I.E. DIPLOMATS AND PRESS) THEY WOULD HAVE BURNED US AS WELL AS THE PAINTINGS." (TEN PAINTINGS, SOME IN BAD CONDITION, HAVE BEEN RETURNED, BUT NONE OF RABIN'S.)

3. RE QUESTIONS RAISED REFTEL, RABIN IS NOT SURE OF LAWS INVOLVED, NOR DID HE SEEM TO CARE, SINCE HE FEELS A POLITICAL, NOT A LEGAL DECISIONS IS INVOLVED. HE SAID THEORETICALLY ANYONE COULD SHOW HIS PAINTINGS IN PUBLIC, BUT IN FACT THIS WOULD NOT OCCUR WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM MILITIA, PARK OR PERHAPS CITY OR REGION OFFICIALS. MILITIA COULD ALWAYS BREAK UP UNAPPROVED ART SHOW BY CITING PROVISIONS ON DISRUPTING TRAFFIC, BREAKING CIVIL ORDER OR "HOLLIGANISM." OTHER ARTISTS HAVE TOLD US OF A CENTRAL COMMITTEE (SIC) RESOLUTION ("POSTANAVLENIYE") PASSED AFTER SIMILAR INCIDENT IN 1967, WHICH GAVE THE ARTISTS UNION AUTHORITY TO APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE HOLDING OF PUBLIC ART EXHIBITS. ON PENALTIES, RABIN'S SON SAID HE AND TWO OTHER ARTISTS WERE CHARGED WITH OBSTRUCTING MILITIA FROM PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES. HE SAID THIS IS NOT CRIMINAL OFFENSE, BUT RATHER ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION WHICH ALLOWS DETENTION UP TO FIFTEEN DAYS UNDER A DECREE ("UKAZ") OF 1966.

4. COMMENT: IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT NEITHER THE ARTISTS NOR THE AUTHORITIES ARE PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH THE LEGAL SITUATION PERTAINING TO SECOND EXHIBIT. SOME ORGANIZERS SAY THEY HAVE WRITTEN TO COUNCIL OF MINISTERS LEGALISTICALLY PROTESTING MILITIA BEHAVIOR AT FIRST EXHIBIT, AND ASKING COUNCIL TO DESIGNATE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES WITH WHOM THEY SHOULD DEAL, BUT HAVE RECEIVED NO ANSWER. MOST ARTISITS VIEW MATTER IN A CONFIDENTIAL

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POLITICAL CONTEXT, HOWEVER, AND, IF LEGAL REMEDIES OR APPEAL PROCEDURES DO EXIST, AT THIS POINT THEY DO NOT SEEM VERY WILLING TO PURSUE THEM. FOR THE AUTHORITIES, ISSUE IS WHETHER TO BAN THE EXHIBIT AND FACE ADVERSE PUBLICITY IN WEST, OR TO ALLOW IT AND WORRY ABOUT THE EFFECT APPROVAL MIGHT HAVE ON FUTURE ACTIVITIES OF UNOFFICIAL ARTISTS AND POSSIBLY OTHER NON-CONFORMIST CULTURAL FIGURES.
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